

**Written Testimony of Pamela Puchalski,
of the Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Select Committee on Children
in support of HB 5218 March 1, 2012**

Good Afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Urban, and members of the Select Committee on Children. My name is Pamela Puchalski and I am the Project Coordinator for the Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health, a labor affiliated organization which focuses on health and safety in the workplace. I come before you today to ask that you support HB 5218 An act concerning toxic fire retardants in children's products.

Although the banning of products containing Tris for children less than three years of age and their parents is not specifically a workplace health and safety issue, it is precedent setting because these toxic chemicals that were once banned from use in children's clothes because they were known to be carcinogenic are back in commerce once again. They are being used in products, specifically designed for daily and frequent use by young children and their parents, such as car seats, nursing pillows, changing pads, and mattresses. Common sense would dictate that if the variations of chlorinated Tris flame retardants are carcinogenic in certain products that come in contact with infants and young children, then they would likewise be carcinogenic in the other products that come in contact with them especially as they off-gas into the air and settle into house dust.

Also disturbing is the evidence that these chlorinated Tris flame retardants do not provide a significant fire safety benefit. Studies have demonstrated that ignition of polyurethane foam products containing the flame retardants is only delayed by 7-12 seconds. Once ignited, the flame retardants actually create a darker smoke which is highly toxic to both the individuals fleeing from the fire and the responders who arrive to put it out. This, of course, leads to the question of whether there is an actual benefit of using these flame retardants in products when there are demonstrated hazards.

Besides being potentially carcinogenic, the different variations of chlorinated Tris have also been linked to a variety of nervous system impairments such as seizures, memory loss, and learning problems. Early research shows that they may disrupt hormone levels and are neurotoxic. Although no human studies have been conducted as of yet, evidence against TDCPP, one of the Tris variations, is suggesting that it may impact fertility by influencing hormone levels and semen quality in men (1).

It is important to remember that these infants and young children who we desperately want to keep safe from any harm ultimately grow up to be teens, young

adults, workers, parents and maybe even grandparents. What we allow them to be exposed to now in their highly vulnerable state may well be setting them up for health problems in their adult life. Is it possible that exposure to these flame retardants could ultimately preclude them to learning disabilities, being unable to conceive a child, developing cancer, or some type of Senile Dementia? The answer to this question is yes and it is because of this that I ask you to support HB 5218 and ban any product containing any variation of Tris and marketed for use for children under the age of three and for their parents and guardians.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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(1)Meeker JD, Stapleton HM 2010. House Dust Concentrations of Organophosphate Flame Retardants in Relation to Hormone Levels and Semen Quality Parameters. Environ Health Perspect 118:318-323.